

*The Ancient World; or Picturesque Sketches of Creation.* By D. T. ANSTED, M.A., F.R.S. &c. Post 8vo, with 149 Illustrations. Van Voorst.

The grandeur of the phænomena with which geologists deal, and the abundant use they have made of the free scope for generalization afforded, have enabled them to take a firmer hold upon popular attention than any of their scientific brethren—the organic chemists of the last few years not excepted. There is a greater breadth as it may be called about the nature of geological facts, and for the comprehension of its more general principles, less application to minute detail is required, so that a large class of persons find interest in and opportunity of acquiring a certain amount of information as to the causes which have been at work in the production of the present structure of the earth they live on, who would not, in these busy times, think it worth while to inquire into the nature and habits of the animals and plants around them.

The dependence however of Geology upon Palæontology has opened a new source of interest in the history of organic life, and the speculations which have arisen out of the investigations of the successive phases presented during the world's existence by the animal and vegetable kingdoms, have within a recent period been "common talk,"—with how much profit to the generality of persons we will not stop here to examine.

Prof. Ansted has done a good service in affording to the unscientific public a record of the real facts of Palæontology, and an authoritative account of the extent to which generalization has as yet been safely carried; and although his book may want some of the poetic richness which has embellished the imaginings of the "development" theorists, we believe that the sincere and earnest exposition of his subject will not be the less attractive.

The vividness of some of his "picturesque sketches," in which he successively groups together the most striking features of the various geologic periods, we may illustrate by an extract. Speaking of Europe during the formation of the older tertiaries, he says:—

"The shores of the islands or of the tract of main land then existing were apparently low and swampy, rivers bringing down mud in what is now the south-east of England and the neighbourhood of Brussels, but extensive calcareous beds near Paris. Deep inlets of the sea, estuaries and the shifting mouths of a river, were also affected by numerous alterations of level, not sufficient to destroy, but powerful enough to modify the animal and vegetable species then existing; and these movements were continued for a long time. The seas were tenanted by sharks, gigantic rays, and many other fishes of warm latitudes, and abounded also with large carnivorous mollusca, capable of living either in fresh or brackish water. The shelving land was clothed with rich tropical vegetation to the water's edge, presenting to view the palm and the cocoa-nut, besides many of those trees which now lend a charm to the Spice Islands of the Indian Seas. All these abounded also with indications of animal life.

"The large rivers were peopled with crocodiles; turtles and porpoises floated upon them; and these tenants of the water, strange and varied as they were, and unlike the present inhabitants of the district, were not without resemblance to many species still met with on the earth.

"The interior of the land, of which the surrounding waters were thus peopled, was no less remarkable, and exhibited appearances no less instructive. Troops of monkeys might be seen skipping lightly from branch to branch in the various trees, or heard mowing and chattering and howling in the deep recesses of the forest. Of the birds, some, clothed in plumage of almost tropical brilliancy, were busy in the forests, while others, such as the vulture, hovered over the spots where death had been busy. Gigantic serpents might have been seen insidiously watching their prey. Other serpents in gaudy dress were darting upon the smaller quadrupeds and birds, and insects glittered brightly in the sun. All these indications of life and activity existed, and that, too, not far distant from the spots on which are placed the two most important cities in the world. But this happened not only before our island was visited by its earliest human discoverer, but long before man had been introduced on the earth."

The illustrations of the work (which is gorgeously "got up") deserve much praise; the absence of complicated detail renders their comprehension more easy by general readers.

Altogether this is a welcome addition to a class of books which we hope to see increase, namely popular scientific works written by scientific men.

## PROCEEDINGS OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

### ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Feb. 23, 1847.—William Yarrell, Esq., Vice-President, in the Chair.

DRAFTS FOR AN ARRANGEMENT OF THE TROCHILIDÆ, WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME NEW SPECIES. BY JOHN GOULD, F.R.S.

Genus PETASOPHORA, G. R. Gray (*Heliothryx*, Boie; *Ramphodon*, Less.; *Colibri*, Spix).

This is one of the best-defined groups of the family, and is distinguished by several peculiarities, the principal of which are the greatly developed ear-coverts and their blue colour, and the similarity in the colouring of the sexes, the females possessing all the brilliancy of the males and only distinguishable from them by their smaller size and more delicate contour: the young too assume the plumage of the adult.

The oldest known species of this form constitutes the type; it is the

Sp. 1. PETASOPHORA SERRIROSTRIS.

*Trochilus serrirostris*, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. tom. vii. p. 359;  
Ency. Méth. part 2. p. 561; Ois. Dor. tom. iii. pl. 1.  
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